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For the Record

*From an article in Foreign Affairs
by Admiral Stansfield Turner:*

Comparisons of the seagoing armed forces of the Soviet Union and the United States are much in the news nowadays, and they are much in what happens behind the news. When our Secretary of State visits Moscow, or shuttles between capitals in Africa or the Middle East, he doubtless does not dwell on specific comparisons of military forces in his political talks, but the armed strength of our nation resonates in his words. Foreign policy transcends military capability, yet that capability tends to limit choices. Great wasteful wars have broken out in our century partly because of misperceived comparisons of armed forces. And war is as often a collapse as it is a continuation of foreign policy.

In offering a professional appraisal of the process of measuring the naval balance and of the relative present strengths of the two navies, I can give no answer either wholly comforting or wholly alarming to the usual, brusque question, "Let's get down to brass tacks. Who's ahead, Admiral?" My general tenor will be, rather, to focus on two questions addressed to people who think seriously about foreign policy: "What do you mean by 'ahead'?" and "How far 'ahead' will suit you, for foreign policy purposes?"

The argument from the facts will tend this way: that as a seagoing power, we are moving into a shrinking range of political options, and a higher level of risk. For this there are two reasons: a major industrial power, the Soviet Union, is building up a navy with dogged determination, reacting to its perception of a threat from our once-overwhelming armed superiority at sea; and meantime there is growing competition at home for military expenditures, especially when there are so many social demands on our national resources.